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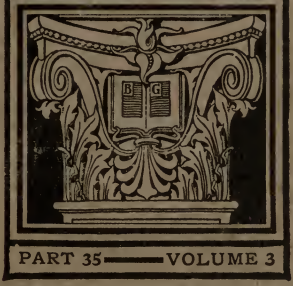
A Series of Illustrated Monographs

Issued Monthly

TURNER



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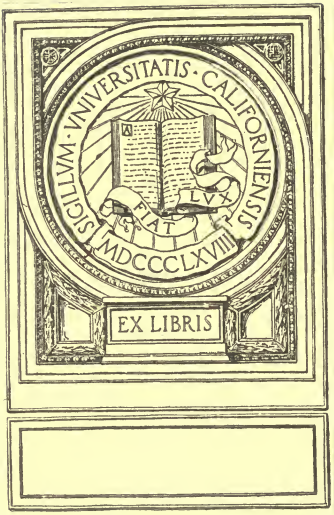
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THE 'FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE'
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THE SHIPWRECK
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THE BAY OF BAIAE
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

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TURNER
VENICE FROM THE CANALE GIUDECCA
SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM, LONDON

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TURNER
PEACE: BURIAL AT SEA
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

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TURNER
RAIN, STEAM, AND SPEED
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

PORTRAIT OF TURNER BY HIMSELF NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

In later years Turner's appearance was far from engaging. Short, stout, and bandy-legged, his hat always brushed the wrong way, his sleeves long enough to hide "the smallest and dirtiest hands on record," his nose hooked and prominent, his blue-gray eyes staring, his face "as red as a boiled lobster," he "looked like the captain of a river steamer." Aware of his unprepossessing aspect, Turner would never have his portrait taken, although several furtive sketches were made of him. In his youth, however, he once sat for a profile drawing, and painted three likenesses of himself, the most important of which, reproduced above, shows him at about twenty-seven.

J. M. W. Turner

BORN 1775: DIED 1851
ENGLISH SCHOOL

HELEN S. CONANT 'HARPER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE': 1878

JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER was born April 23, 1775, just at the outbreak of the American Revolution, in a humble dwelling in Maiden Lane, London. His father, William Turner, was a hair-dresser who drove a thriving business curling and powdering the wigs of the gentry. Of his mother little is known, except that she was a woman of ungovernable temper who led her husband a sad life, and toward the end of her days became insane.

An anecdote has been preserved which marks the starting-point of Turner's art life. One morning, when he was about six years old, his father went to the house of a certain Mr. Tomkinson, a rich silversmith, to dress that gentleman's hair. The boy accompanied him, and, while the father was at work frizzling the wig of his grand patron, was placed on a chair, where he sat in silent awe, gazing at a huge silver salver adorned with rampant lions. The barber's work finished, father and son returned to the dusky little shop in the lane. The boy was silent and thoughtful all that day. At tea-time he appeared, triumphantly producing a sheet of paper, upon which was drawn a lion, a very good imitation of the one mounted on the salver at Mr. Tomkinson's. The barber was beside himself with delight, and his son's vocation was at once settled. Two or three years later the door of the shop was ornamented by small water-color drawings hung around among the wigs and frizzes, and ticketed at prices varying from one shilling to three. Some were copies or imitations of the work of Paul Sandby, a fashionable drawing-master; others were original sketches made by "Boy Turner," as he was then called.

The barber, although very parsimonious, determined to give his son a good education; and accordingly, when William was ten years old, he was sent to school at Brentford. Here he struggled vainly with Latin grammar and English history; but, except when his imagination was touched by stories of classic fable, the learning which was crammed into his head by the Brentford schoolmaster remained undigested; and when his father came to take him home his

greatest treasures were the hieroglyphics of birds and trees and bits of landscape with which the blank leaves of his school-books were covered.

Still another attempt was made to educate the boy, and he was placed at school at Margate. Here he first saw the sea, and would sit motionless on the breezy piers for hours, watching the waves dashing in and breaking against the cliffs. It was at Margate that he fell in love with the sister of a schoolmate—a boyish affection merely, for neither girl nor boy was over fourteen; but the love, and the ensuing disappointment influenced his character through life.

That Turner attended a drawing-school kept by Sandby is certain; he also was placed in charge of Thomas Malton, a perspective draftsman. But to Turner the world of circles and triangles was a mass of wiry cobwebs. He could not learn even the elementary lines of geometrical drawing. Finally his master, in sheer desperation, shut the books, and, rolling up the blotted diagrams, took the crestfallen boy back to Maiden Lane. "Mr. Turner," exclaimed Malton, "it is no use; the boy will never do anything. He is impenetrably dull, sir! It is throwing your money away. Better make him a tinker, sir, or a cobbler, than a perspective artist." All this was very dismal to the poor barber, and for a time the boy did nothing but make a few shillings here and there by embellishing architectural drawings; but when he was about fifteen he obtained regular employment of this kind in the office of Mr. Hardwick, an architect. Some of his sketches are still preserved and show wonderful skill for a boy so young; and it was Mr. Hardwick who informed the barber that his son was too imaginative and possessed too much artistic spirit to waste his time on mere technical work, and recommended that he be sent as a student to the Royal Academy. To the Royal Academy William accordingly went. As a proof of fitness, he submitted a drawing of a Greek statue, and was admitted as a probationary student. And now his art life may be said to have fairly begun.

During his youth Turner was very fond of making pedestrian sketching-tours. He sketched rapidly whatever scene caught his eye, made quick pencil notes in his pocket-book, and, with the aid of a stupendously retentive memory, photographed into his mind legions of transitory effects of cloud and sky. He soon began to teach water-color drawing at schools, at first for five shillings a lesson, and as his talents became known he found employment making drawings for illustrated gift-books.

When he was about twenty-one an incident occurred which changed his whole character. The old boyish affection for the sister of his Margate school friend had grown into the passionate love of a man. The lady returned his love, and the young people became engaged just before Turner started for a long and extended tour of study. Then came the story of a cruel stepmother, who intercepted all Turner's letters, and finally drove the young girl to believe herself abandoned, and to give her hand to another suitor. When Turner returned home, full of joy and hope, he found her about to marry another man. Incalculable was the harm this early disappointment wrought upon his sensitive nature; and he gradually began to change,

not into the misanthrope, but into the self-concentrated, reserved money-maker.

In 1800 he removed from his father's home in Maiden Lane to Harley Street—a step which may be regarded as indicating improved resources. In this same year he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, and two years later attained the distinction of Royal Academician, with full honors.

At different times Turner traveled all over Europe and Great Britain, and his sketch-books are filled with bits of scenery of every description. He used to start off whenever the mood took him, and was annoyed if in any foreign place he, by accident, met some English acquaintance. He was no letter-writer, and often when away his friends at home were utterly ignorant of his whereabouts.

In 1808 Turner was appointed professor of perspective in the Royal Academy; but his knowledge of perspective was a matter of intuition, and could not be measured by line and rule, and although he held the professorship for thirty years, he lectured very little, and then only to the mystification of his hearers.

In 1812 he took a house in Queen Anne Street, and in the following year purchased a country place at Twickenham, where he built a villa after his own designs. This villa, "Sandycombe Lodge," he retained for nearly fifteen years, and finally sold, for the reason that too many of his friends had discovered his retreat. Their visits were not consistent with his economical style of living.

Turner's life at "Sandycombe Lodge" was rural and simple. A great lover of birds, he would allow no birdnesting, and was christened "Old Blackbirdy" by all the youngsters of the neighborhood. He had a boat in which he made sketching excursions, and also a gig with an old crop-eared horse of which he was very fond.

He was very abstemious in his habits. Everything at the Lodge was of the most modest pretensions. At his city residence in Queen Anne Street the same economy ruled; indeed, he had scarcely altered his style of living since the days of the barber's shop in Maiden Lane. The barber's business had declined, owing to the heavy taxes imposed on wigs and to the changes of fashion; and the barber himself, at the time of Turner's removal to Harley Street, had come to live with his son. The old man used to stretch and varnish his son's canvases, and Turner would say, laughingly, "Father begins and finishes all my pictures." There was a great affection between the two, and one of the reasons Turner gave for selling the place at Twickenham was that "Dad" was always working in the garden and catching cold. The old man died in 1830, and Turner mourned his loss with so much feeling that he was depressed in spirit and unable to paint for some months. . . .

In Queen Anne Street he painted in what he called his drawing-room, in which there was a good north light. The house itself was cold, dirty, and forsaken looking; very few visitors entered it, and the quiet was principally broken by noisy meetings of all the cats in the neighborhood, which

used to assemble undisturbed in the area. Weather-stained and soot-begrimed without, the house was still more dismal within. The gallery, where were stored treasures of inestimable worth, was dreary and dilapidated. Dampness crept in at every crevice and corner, and many of the pictures became cracked, warped, and seriously injured. Here, in this cheerless room, stacked against the walls, hanging where the rain streamed down the canvases from the warped sashes and paper-patched frames of the ill-fitting skylights, were collected some of Turner's noblest landscapes, while in other parts of the dismal house thirty thousand proofs of magnificent engravings and piles of drawings and sketches were stuffed in dark closets, or laid away in portfolios and presses, rotting and molding.

Notes for hundreds, checks for thousands, had been offered again and again in that gallery to the artist, but eager as he was to make money, he showed a strange persistence in keeping his treasures in his possession. To certain pictures he was deeply attached, and when induced to sell them would go about wearing a look of great dejection. When pressed by some friend to explain the reason of his trouble, he would sorrowfully exclaim, "I 've lost one of my children this week." Sometimes, by a little wit and daring, of both of which Turner himself had a large share and which he admired in others, a purchaser would put him in a moment into a tractable mood. Mr. Gillott, the pen manufacturer of Birmingham, once determined to obtain admission at any price to the enchanted house in Queen Anne Street. Arrived at the blistered, dirty door, he pulled the bell, and after a long, inhospitable pause, an old woman, having looked up from the area, slowly ascended and opened the door. She snappishly asked the gentleman's business; and when told, "Can't let 'e in," was her answer; after which she tried to slam the door. But during the parley he had put his foot in; and now, declining further interruption, pushed past the enraged janitress, and hurried up-stairs to the gallery. In a moment Turner was out upon him with the promptitude of a spider whose web has been invaded. The gentleman introduced himself, and stated that he had come to buy. "Don't want to sell!" was the answer. "Have you ever seen our *Birmingham* pictures, Mr. Turner?" inquired the visitor, with unruffled placidity. "Never 'eard of 'em," said Turner. The merchant drew from his pocket a bundle of Birmingham banknotes. "Mere paper," observed Turner, evidently enjoying the joke. "To be bartered for mere canvas," said the visitor, waving his hand in the direction of some paintings. This tone of cool depreciation had the desired effect. Turner at once became civil, even jovial, and the visitor soon departed with several valuable pictures, for which he had paid £5,000. . . .

Turner worked with great rapidity. He often began and finished a fine water-color drawing in a single forenoon. When the mood took him he worked like a tiger, sponging in effects in an instant, or making the texture of a stone with a single pressure of his thumb. His facility was astonishing. "He would frequently," says Mr. Ruskin, "send his canvas to the British Institution with nothing upon it but a gray groundwork of vague,

indistinguishable forms, and finish it upon varnishing-day into a work of great splendor."

It was on Academy varnishing-day that all the strange contradictions of Turner's character had full play. He was jovial, he was gruff and taciturn, full of kindness for a brother artist, or striving to kill other pictures by the brilliancy of his own. Wilkie Collins, when a boy, used to hold his father's paints for him on varnishing-day. He remembers seeing Turner—a shabby, red-faced, oldish man—sitting on the top of a flight of steps, astride a box, with his dirty chest of colors, and worn-out brushes, and a palette of which the uncleanliness was sufficient to shock a Dutch painter. Mounted on the steps, he would paint with great fury, trying perhaps to "checkmate" some brother artist, as he was accustomed to say. His sense of humor was so keen, however, that he was more amused than angry when he found himself overmatched. Once on a varnishing-day he saw that the blue sky in one of his Venetian pictures was rendered dull and lifeless by the brilliancy of the sky in a view of Ghent by Jones. "I 'll outblue you, Joney," he said; and chuckling audibly, he climbed on a box and deepened his sky with a scumble of ultramarine. When he had gone away, Jones, jocularly determined to baffle him, set to work and painted the sky of the 'Ghent' a blank white, which, acting as a foil, made Turner's Venetian sky look preposterously blue. Turner laughed heartily when he returned the next day, to find himself checkmated. "Well, Joney," was his admission, "you have done me now; but it must go."

Turner's sparing habits gave him the name of being a miser. This he undoubtedly was; but when the great object of his life became known, and it was found that he had done his best to bequeath an enormous fortune for the benefit of his poor comrades in art, no one could choose but honor him.

The real source of his great wealth was not so much what he received from the sale of his paintings as the constant income from engravings of his works. It was by the publication of such works as the 'Rivers of France' and his illustrations to the poems of Scott and Rogers that Turner's genius became widely known and recognized. The 'Liber Studiorum,' a collection of over seventy engravings, was the most important of all his publications. The Duke of Devonshire had published the 'Liber Veritatis' of Claude, and it was in a spirit of rivalry that Turner commenced his work, which was intended to exemplify his command of the whole compass of landscape art, and the boundless richness of his stores both of fact and invention.

Turner painted many pictures on subjects from classic and ancient history, and was fond of adding poetical quotations to their titles. He sometimes wrote poetry himself,—a rambling confusion of words at best,—and for many years he quoted in the Academy catalogue from a manuscript poem, 'The Fallacies of Hope,'—imaginary and unwritten, his friends believed, as no such manuscript was found among his papers after his death, unless, as some wag suggested, such might have been the title of his last will and testament.

In 1851 Turner had no picture in the Royal Academy Exhibition. It was

also known that he had given strict orders at Queen Anne Street that no one should be admitted to the gallery there. His health was failing fast; no longer the sturdy, dogged, strange being of old, he was now a broken, decrepit old man. His absence from the Academy meetings alarmed his friends, and many inquiries were made at Queen Anne Street. He was not there; neither did the old housekeeper know of his whereabouts; but a letter that she found one day in a coat pocket led her to suspect that he was at Chelsea. Thither she accordingly went; and after much gossiping about town with boatmen and their wives, learned that a "queer old fellow," known as Mr. Booth,—"Puggy Booth," the boys called him,—was lying sick at one of the cottages by the riverside, and that for the last two months he had only been seen lying on the railed-in roof of the cottage, wrapped up in an old dressing-gown, apparently watching the river flowing by. It was supposed in town that he was an old admiral in reduced circumstances, on account of the love he had shown for the shipping and the piers. The housekeeper, feeling confident that Mr. Booth and Turner were one, hurried to inform the artist's friends. Mr. Harpur, who subsequently was one of his executors, hastened to Chelsea, but was only in time to find Turner fast sinking. On the following day, December 19, 1851, he died, with his face turned toward the window, through which might be seen the sunshine mantling the river and lighting the sails of the boats drifting up and down.

Turner's will was an unfortunate document. His intention had been to leave small sums to various relatives—people whom he had hated and avoided in his life; all the paintings and sketches stowed away at Queen Anne Street were to go to the National Gallery, and his large funded property was designed to found a charity for decayed English artists, to be called "Turner's Gift." But he had written his own will. It was a cloudy document full of confusions and interpolations, which was disputed by the next of kin; and only after four years of contention was a compromise effected, by which the pictures went to the National Gallery, £20,000 to the Royal Academy, £1,000 for the erection of a monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, where he was buried, and all the remaining property was divided among the heirs at law.

The Art of Turner

NO study of the life and works of Turner would be complete without some reference to his great champion, John Ruskin. At a time when the critics were assailing Turner on every side, Ruskin entered the lists and vehemently defended him from their attacks. His article refuting their charges, written in 1836, when its author was seventeen and an undergraduate at Oxford, became the nucleus of 'Modern Painters,' a work the expressed object of which was to prove Turner the greatest landscape-painter the world had ever known. The first volume was published in 1843. Its success was

immediate. "Such wonderful books on art," writes Thornbury, "the world had never yet seen. They exasperated some, electrified others, and delighted the majority. Works of Turner forgotten by the ordinary public were recalled; his enemies were gradually silenced; and with a thrill of satisfaction England came to realize that she had at last produced a truly great painter."

It must, however, be acknowledged that Mr. Ruskin's analysis of Turner's genius is that of a partisan rather than that of a dispassionate critic; and that his estimate of both Turner the man and Turner the artist is so far from critical—at times indeed so misleading—that notwithstanding the inspired brilliancy of his rhetoric and the noble spirit which pervades his writings, the *real* Turner must be sought elsewhere than in the glowing pages of 'Modern Painters.' It is impossible in the present limited space to give an adequate summary of the author's views, if, indeed, a summary be possible at all, with a writer who was so prone to digression, so lacking in orderly presentation, so apt to soar away from his subject on the wings of his own unsurpassed rhetoric, and, finally, so frequently self-contradicting. But it is hoped that the following extracts from Mr. Ruskin's various writings may help to show what he considered the principal elements in Turner's genius.

Ruskin divides Turner's art life into three periods; the work of the first being distinguished by "boldness of handling, generally gloomy tendency of mind, subdued color, and perpetual reference to precedent in composition. . . . Generally the pictures belonging to this time are notable for their gray or brown color, and firm, sometimes heavy, laying-on of paint. The evidences of invention, or of new perception, are rarer in this period than in subsequent ones. It was not so much to think brilliantly as to draw accurately that Turner was trying; not so much to invent new things as to rival old.

"Pictures belonging to the second period are technically distinguished from those of the first in three particulars: First, Color appears everywhere instead of gray. His shadow is no longer of one hue, but perpetually varied; whilst the lights, instead of being subdued to any conventional level, are always painted as near the brightness of natural color as he can. Secondly, Refinement takes the place of force. He had discovered that it is much more difficult to draw tenderly than ponderously, and that all the most beautiful things in nature depended on infinitely delicate lines. Thirdly, Quantity takes the place of mass. Turner had also ascertained in the course of his studies that nature was infinitely full, and that old painters had not only missed her pitch of hue, but her power of accumulation. He saw there were more clouds in any sky than ever had been painted; more trees in every forest, more crags on every hillside; and he set himself with all his strength to proclaim this great fact of Quantity in the universe. . . . He saw, indeed, that there were no limits to creation, but forgot that there were to reception; he thus spoiled his most careful works by the very richness of invention they contained, and concentrated the materials of twenty noble pictures into a single failure. . . . All the works of this period are, however, essentially Turnerian; original in conception, and unprecedented in treatment. . . .

"As Turner drew towards old age, the aspect of mechanical effort and

ambitious accumulation fades from his work, and a deep imaginative delight and tender rest in the loveliness of what he had learned to see in nature take their place. It is true that when goaded by the reproaches cast upon his work, he would often meet contempt with contempt, and paint, not as in his middle period, to prove his power, but merely to astonish or to defy his critics. . . . Though in most respects this is the crowning period of his genius, in a few there are evidences in it of approaching decline. . . . The very fullness of its imaginative beauty involved some loss of distinctness, some absence of deliberation in arrangement; and as we approach nearer and nearer the period of decline, considerable feebleness of hand. . . . His health, and with it in great degree his mind, failed suddenly in the year 1845. He died in 1851. The paintings of these five closing years are to the rest of his work what 'Count Robert of Paris' and 'Castle Dangerous' are to the Waverley Novels. But Scott's mind failed slowly by almost imperceptible degrees; Turner's suddenly with snap of some vital chord. . . .

"Every landscape-painter before Turner had acquired distinction by confining his efforts to one class of subjects. . . . But Turner challenged and vanquished each in his own peculiar field; and having done this, set himself to paint the natural scenery of skies, which until his time had never been so much as attempted. He is the only painter who has ever drawn the sky—not the clear sky, which was painted beautifully by the early religious schools, but the various forms and phenomena of the cloudy heavens, all previous artists having only represented it typically or partially, but he perfectly and universally. . . .

"He is the only painter who has ever drawn a mountain or a stone; no other man having learned their organization, or possessed himself of their spirit except in part and obscurely. He is the only painter who ever drew the stem of a tree, who has ever represented the surface of calm, or the force of agitated water; who has represented the effects of space on distant objects, or who has rendered the abstract beauty of natural color. . . .

"Take up one of Turner's distances. Abundant, beyond the power of the eye to embrace or follow, vast and various, beyond the power of the mind to comprehend, there is yet not one atom in its whole extent and mass which does not suggest more than it represents; nor does it suggest vaguely, but in such a manner as to prove that the conception of each individual inch of that distance is absolutely clear and complete in the master's mind, a separate picture fully worked out; but yet, clearly and fully as the idea is formed, just so much of it is given, and no more, as nature would have allowed us to feel or see. Not one line out of the millions there is without meaning, yet there is not one which is not affected and disguised by the dazzle and indecision of distance. No form is made out, and yet no form is unknown. . . .

"If there be one principle or secret more than another on which Turner depends for attaining brilliance of light, it is his clear and exquisite drawing of the *shadows*. Whatever is obscure, misty, or undefined in his objects or atmosphere, he takes care that the shadows be sharp and clear—and then he knows that the light will take care of itself, and he makes them clear, not by

blackness, but by excessive evenness, unity, and sharpness of edge. He will throw them one after another like transparent veils, along the earth and upon the air, till the whole picture palpitates with them, and yet the darkest of them will be a faint gray, imbued and penetrated with light. . . .

"The peculiar innovation of Turner was the perfection of the color chord by means of *scarlet*. Other painters had rendered the golden tones and the blue tones of sky, but none had dared to paint, none seemed to have seen, the scarlet and purple. Nor was it only in seeing this color in vividness when it recurred in full light that Turner differed from preceding painters. His most distinctive innovation as a colorist was his discovery of the scarlet *shadow*. . . .

"It was thought that he painted chiefly from imagination, when his peculiar character, as distinguished from all other artists, was in always drawing from memories of seen facts. . . . There is not one change in the casting of the jagged shadow along the hollows of the hills but it is fixed on his mind forever; not a flake of spray has broken from the sea of cloud about their bases but he has watched it as it melts away, and could recall it to its lost place in heaven by the slightest effort of his thoughts. . . .

"There is no test of our acquaintance with nature so absolute and unfailing as the degree of admiration we feel for Turner's painting. Precisely as we are shallow in our knowledge, vulgar in our feeling, and contracted in our views of principles, will the works of this artist be stumbling-blocks or foolishness to us:—precisely in the degree in which we are familiar with nature, constant in our observation of her, and enlarged in our understanding of her, will they expand before our eyes into glory and beauty. In every new insight which we obtain into the works of God, in every new idea which we receive from His creation, we shall find ourselves possessed of an interpretation and a guide to something in Turner's works which we had not before understood. . . . We shall feel, wherever we go, that he has been there before us, whatever we see, that he has seen and seized before us; and we shall at last cease the investigation with a well-grounded trust that whatever we have been unable to account for, and what we still dislike in his works, has reason for it, and foundation like the rest; and that even where he has failed or erred, there is a beauty in the failure which none are able to equal, and a dignity in the error which none are worthy to reprove."

PAUL MANTZ 'GAZETTE DES BEAUX-ARTS': 1862

TURNER grasped less the truth of nature than her splendors and her magic. He was above all a dreamer. Faithful to tradition during the earlier part of his career, he seems to have found his guide in Claude Lorrain; and the pictures that he painted during this early period were of great beauty,—grandiose yet simple, in which the light showed with single and transparent radiance, or transmuted far perspectives into glowing mists.

To this time of sane and diligent study there succeeded a troubled period. Turner's mind seems to have remained sound, but his eye began to see strange visions. From his youth up he had been preoccupied with light and its effects,

but now he attempted to analyze it, forgetting the danger of straining the serene ray through a prism, as it were, and decomposing that of which the very essence is unity. His eye became the eye of an analyst rather than that of an observer; and he began to see nature lighted with blue light or red light or green or violet; but all, for a time, with unquestionable sanity and sincerity. Conceived more and more under this analytical preoccupation with light merely as light, however, his later pictures belong rather to the realm of optical impressionism than to that of painting. There is little or no design in them, and intelligible conception seems wanting—they are but the flamboyant sunrises or fiery sunsets of a chimerical land; and Turner, as an artist, escapes from us. However eager we may be to understand him, sober reason can hardly follow his intoxicated phantasy; and we must admit ourselves baffled in our attempt to pursue the later flight of an artist—and unquestionably a great one—who, falling asleep, as it were, beneath the soft gold of a sunset by Claude, waked to paint a demoniac sunrise which our eyes can never see.—FROM THE FRENCH

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON 'THE LIFE OF J. M. W. TURNER'

THE first question about any painter concerns his technical excellence. Was Turner an excellent painter, technically? He was excellent in some points but unequal and unsafe. It is very difficult to classify him justly, his work lies so much outside of the good sound work of the great masters.

"In our time," said Fromentin, "either men paint carefully, and not always very well, or else they take no further trouble about it and hardly paint at all. The work is heavy and summary, lively and *négligé*, sensitive and rapidly got over, or else it is conscientious, explaining itself everywhere, according to the laws of imitation, and nobody, not even those who practise it, would venture to affirm that such painting is any the better for being scrupulous." If you give this admirably candid paragraph the attention that it deserves, it will enable you to understand the spirit of Turner's technical practice. He was one of those moderns who "take no further trouble about it"; his work was "sensitive and rapidly got over," certainly not "conscientious, explaining itself everywhere according to the laws of imitation." He painted simply to express himself, heedless of the quality of the expression. He used any new color that the experimentalizing ingenuity of modern chemistry could invent for the temptation of an artist. He used body-color and oil in the same works, and when pictures were sent by him from Rome in 1829, he said, "If any wet gets to them they will be destroyed." But it is not simply for its want of durability that his painting is unsound. It has not the firmness and substance of thorough work. Look at a De Hooch, say the 'Court of a Dutch House,' a picture with a good constitution, sound all through, yet painted two hundred years ago. See how brilliant it is; see how the colors are laid in their places, and how dense and strong is the substance of the paint, yet how light at the same time, and representative of nature! . . . Considered simply as painting, the work of these old Dutchmen is to that of Turner what parchment is to paper. If from Holland you cross over to

Italy and accustom your eyes to the quiet splendor of Titian and then pass to Turner, you will find a difference like that between tapestry and cotton-print.

In water-color the case presents a very different aspect. Turner was unquestionably the greatest master of water-color who has ever lived. He may have been excelled since in some special departments of the art, in some craft of execution, or in the knowledge of some particular thing in nature; but no one has ever deserved such generally high rank in water-color painting.

Though Turner was a reckless experimentalist, he was a very brilliant experimentalist, full of ideas and perpetually trying to realize his ideas. In fecundity of conception the old Dutchmen and Venetians are not to be compared with him for an instant. But though his experiments were always interesting, and often in the highest degree astonishing and wonderful, they are seldom quite satisfactory except in parts. He was always trying to paint the unpaintable, which the Dutch and Venetians most prudently and carefully avoided. This tendency was skilfully hit by *Punch*, with the exaggeration which properly belongs to satire, in the following imaginary title for a Turnerian picture:

34. A Typhoon bursting in a Simoom over the Whirlpool of Maelstrom, Norway; with a ship on fire, an eclipse, and the effect of a lunar rainbow.

> "O Art, how vast thy mighty wonders are
> To those who roam upon the extraordinary deep!
> Maelstrom, thy hand is here."
>
> *From an Unpublished Poem.*

Do not let us be so narrow-minded as to forbid an artist to paint the unpaintable if he likes, but let us remember that when he does so the result must inevitably be a mere sign or substitute for the thing represented, a sort of pictorial algebra.

There is one point, and one only, in which Turner really did excel the artists of all time, and that is in his appreciation of mystery in nature, and his superlatively exquisite rendering of it. Mystery in nature and art may be defined as that condition of things in which they are partially seen, sufficiently for us to be aware that something is there, but not sufficiently for us to determine all about it by sight alone, unaided by the inferences of experience. A bad painter would either explain too much, from mere knowledge, or else simplify to get rid of the difficulty; a painter who knew the value of mystery, and was able to render it, would show just enough of his objects to let the eye of the spectator lose them and find them again as it would in nature, with the same uncertainty about what they are. Turner could paint strongly and mysteriously at the same time, which gave a great charm to his work for cultivated eyes, though it had the disadvantage of offending the vulgar by not being intelligible to them.

Mr. Ruskin places Turner amongst the seven supreme colorists of the world, the other six being, in his estimate, Giorgione, Titian, Veronese,

Tintoretto, Correggio, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. I should say that Turner's color was often wonderful, often far below his best, and seldom natural. I should say, too, that he produced fine color much less habitually than Giorgione, Titian, and Correggio, that he was often crude and violent, and occasionally hot, heavy, or dull. His unfaithfulness to nature would prove nothing against him as a colorist, but rather imply a possibility in his favor. The color of the great colorists is really nothing but a sort of visible music which has to be brilliant or harmonious, but which is always sufficiently like nature if it does not offend the spectator. Mr. Ruskin's declaration that color requires special veracity is simply one of those paradoxes which he throws up now and then like rockets to prevent his readers from falling into a state of inattention. . . .

Turner's experiments in color had more to do with art than with nature, and in many of his pictures, especially his later ones, a certain technical purpose manifests itself—the opposition between hot and cold tints in broad masses. This opposition is often between yellow and black, or between scarlet and cold gray. He is said to have declared that yellow was his favorite color. The greatest technical merit of his coloring is his wonderfully brilliant performance in the upper notes. He carried up more color into the regions of light than any other painter. An American critic says that "Turner, being deficient in color, lacked the first element of a painter"; but the word "deficient" seems inaccurate in this case. Turner was empirical, experimental, rash, adventurous to temerity, disposed to trust his own genius to any extent in wanderings from the beaten track; but he can hardly, even in his failures, be called deficient. His artistic nature, with all its errors, was one of the most opulent that ever existed.

I need hardly dwell upon his imaginative power. Every picture, every drawing, almost every sketch, executed after he reached manhood, bears evidence of the action of imagination which in his works would often amplify a simple theme, or heighten still further the sublimity of a sublime one. There have been few artists of any kind, there has not been one landscape-painter, in whom the action of the imaginative faculty has been so constant; and it is more surprising in his case that his production was so enormous. This incessant action of the imaginative faculty made it impossible for Turner to draw the scenes of nature faithfully; but what his drawings lose in fidelity they generally more than regain in art.

A quality in Turner's art which has been much less spoken of than his imagination is his taste, which was of exquisite refinement. It was not infallible; there are compositions by him which seem sadly wanting in taste, compositions overburdened with uninteresting material or spoiled by awkward arrangement; but notwithstanding occasional failures it is certain, so far as anything about such a disputable subject can be, that Turner had a delicate and singularly elegant perception of the becoming in the arrangement of his materials, that he gave almost every subject a certain charm, commonly attributed to what people used to call his "magic-pencil," but in reality due to

a fine choice in selection and rejection, watchfully exercised by a mind of exceptional refinement. . . .

I should say, then, to sum up, that Turner was a landscape-painter of extraordinary yet by no means unlimited genius, a subtle and delicate but unfaithful draftsman, a learned and refined but often fallacious chiaroscurist, a splendid and brilliant but rarely natural colorist, a man gifted with wonderful fertility of imagination and strength of memory (though this last is less easy to determine because he altered everything), a student of nature whose range was vast indeed, for it included mountains, lakes, lowland rivers, and the sea, besides all kinds of human works that can affect the appearance of a landscape; yet not universal, for he never adequately illustrated the familiar forest trees, and had not the sentiment of the forest, neither had he the rustic sentiment in its perfection. I should say that Turner was greatly distinguished by his knowledge, but still more distinguished by his exquisite taste, and by the singular charm which it gave to most of his works, though not to all of them; that he was technically a wonderful but imperfect and irregular painter in oil, unsafe and unsound in his processes, though at the same time both strong and delicate in handling; that he stands apart and alone in water-color, which in his hands is like a new art. He was a very great and illustrious artist, but not the greatest of artists. I believe that his fame will last; that he was as much a poet on canvas as Byron and Shelley were in written language; and that although it is possible that his performance may be afterwards excelled, it will be very difficult for any future landscape-painter to rival his reputation in his own country.

W. COSMO MONKHOUSE 'TURNER'

TURNER had begun by imitation, he had gone on by rivalry, he had achieved a style of his own by which he had upset all preconceived notions of landscape-painting, and had triumphed in establishing the superiority of pictures painted in a light key, but he was not content. His progress had always been towards light even from the earliest days, when he worked in monochrome. Sunlight was his discovery, he had found its presence in shadow, he had studied its complicated reflections before he commenced to work in color. From monochrome he had adopted the low scale of the old masters, but into it he carried his light; the brown clouds, and shadows and mists, had the sun behind them as it were in veiled splendor. Then it came out and flooded his drawings and his canvases with a glory unseen before in art. But he must go on, refine upon this. Having eclipsed all others, he must now eclipse himself. His gold must turn to yellow, and yellow almost to white, before his genius could be satisfied with its efforts to express pure sunlight. . . .

First of all men to endeavor to paint the full power of the sun, Turner was the greatest pictorial interpreter of the elemental forces of nature that ever lived. The nobleness of his life consisted in his devotion to landscape-art, and this should cover many sins. He found it sunk very low; he left it raised to a height which it had never attained before.

The Works of Turner

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

'ULYSSES DERIDING POLYPHEMUS' PLATE I

IN Mr. Ruskin's opinion, Turner's central period of power begins with this picture, first exhibited in 1829, in which his special abilities are seen at their best. It now hangs in the National Gallery, London.

The subject is an incident from the Odyssey. Ulysses, having escaped from the cave of Polyphemus by putting out the giant's single eye with a heated stave, is flying to sea in his gilded galley. The sailors flock up the masts, and the red oars are hastily thrust from the vessel's sides to sweep her away from the dangerous shore and out of the reach of the monster's missiles. Ulysses, on the high poop, with uplifted hands, shouts derisively at the blinded Polyphemus, who writhes his huge bulk on the top of the cliff. Mr. Ruskin ranks the sky as "beyond comparison the finest that exists in Turner's oil-paintings." Far in the east, the sun, heralded by Apollo in his chariot, rises amid the mist. Here and there are openings into the blue depths behind, and here and there float little clouds, tipped with the gold and crimson of morning. Beneath, the gold-green sea reflects the gilded galley with its brilliant pennants and creamy sails, and round its prow a shoal of sea-nymphs urge the vessel on.

"It shows," writes Mr. Monkhouse, "the most complete balance of power of any of Turner's greater works, being not less wonderful for choice of subject than for grandeur of conception and splendor of coloring. It proved what Turner could do when his imagination was thoroughly inflamed."

'CROSSING THE BROOK' PLATE II

THIS picture, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815 and now in the National Gallery, London, is one of the finest works of Turner's earliest period.

In its composition it illustrates his characteristic method of regrouping the features of natural scenery to suit himself. Here, for instance, the foreground is a scene on the river Tamar; the headlands of Plymouth Sound, which was twelve miles away, close the view, and the space between is made up of bits combined from various other landscapes.

The picture is regarded by Hamerton as one of the most important in Turner's career in that it marks the transition from his earlier style to that of his maturity. "There are those who consider 'Crossing the Brook' to be one of his greatest works," writes this critic, "but here they are in error. The full splendor and power of his art were yet to come, yet this sober and admirable picture cleared the way, as a successful experiment, to an art which had no precedent."

'DIDO BUILDING CARTHAGE' PLATE III

IN 1815 Turner exhibited his picture of 'Dido Building Carthage, or the Rise of the Carthaginian Empire,' the best known work of his early period. It represents the Queen of Carthage surrounded by her subjects, superintending the building of the city that was destined to become the great maritime power of the ancient world. It is painted in the classic vein and is distinctly an echo of the work of Claude Lorrain.

Technically the painting cannot rank among Turner's highest achievements. The coloring, although not without a certain magnificence, is heavy, the lighting impossible, and the whole scene unreal and artificial; but with all its faults the skill of the composer makes itself felt, and in the way of color it is his greatest effort prior to his visit to Italy.

Although offered £2,500 for this picture, Turner refused to sell it. "It was reported," says Leslie, "that he had declared his intention of being buried in his 'Carthage.' I was told that he said to Chantrey, 'I have appointed you one of my executors. Will you promise to see me rolled up in it?' 'Yes,' said Chantrey, 'and I promise you that as soon as you are buried I will see you taken up and unrolled.' The story was so generally believed that when Turner died and Dean Milman heard that he was to be buried in St. Paul's, he said, 'I will not read the service over him if he is wrapped up in that picture.'"

Turner bequeathed this work and his painting of 'The Sun Rising in a Mist' to the National Gallery on condition that both canvases should be hung between the two pictures by Claude Lorrain which are now placed beside them.

'THE SLAVE SHIP' PLATE IV

'SLAVERS throwing overboard the Dead and Dying; Typhoon coming on,' is the title under which Turner entered this picture at the Exhibition of 1840. After being in Mr. Ruskin's possession it was brought to America, and now hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Of 'The Slave Ship' Mr. Ruskin has written with laudatory eloquence: "I think the noblest sea that Turner ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of 'The Slave Ship.' It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after a prolonged storm, but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of the sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light. I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. The color is absolutely perfect; not one false or morbid hue in any part, or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as

fearless; its tones as true as they are wonderful; and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable sea."

But other critics by no means echo the writer of 'Modern Painters.' The American landscapist Mr. George Inness wrote frankly that he considered it "the most infernal piece of clap-trap ever painted. There is nothing in it. It is not even a fine bouquet of color. The color is harsh, disagreeable, and discordant."

Justice probably lies between the two extreme opinions. In color, 'The Slave Ship' is one of those compositions in which Turner used the most brilliant of his pigments. As Mr. Hamerton says, "A lurid splendor was his purpose, and he hesitated at nothing for its attainment." About the details of the foreground there can hardly be two opinions. The sharks are quite unnecessary, the bodies in the water too many, the absurdity of the chains appearing above it too gross; the horror is melodramatic and overdone; indeed, as Mr. Monkhouse puts it, "one of Turner's finest conceptions is spoiled for lack of a little common sense. It shows a childishness, a want of mental faculties of the simplest kind, all the more extraordinary when brought in contrast with such great pictorial power."

'THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE' PLATE V

THE 'Téméraire' was a ship of the line which finished a warrior's career gloriously at the battle of Trafalgar, where, the second ship in Nelson's division, she led the van and broke the line of the combined fleets. Her injuries in that battle unfitted her for further active duties; and she became first a prison-ship, then a receiving-ship, and finally was sold out of the service. It happened one day that Turner, with a party of brother artists, was upon the Thames, when there glided down upon their boat the old 'Téméraire,' being towed to her last berth by a fiery little steam-tug. "There 's a fine subject, Turner," said Clarkson Stanfield. Turner made no answer, but at the Academy Exhibition the next year, 1839, he exhibited 'The Fighting Téméraire, tugged to her Last Berth to be Broken up'—in many ways the finest of all his achievements. The picture, now in the London National Gallery, is brilliant and yet solemn in color. The sky is of a dull red where the sun is setting, with yellow rising up to the blue at the top. The tug is green, and her reflection in the water is a neutral brown. The lighting is obviously wilful; but apparently Turner's object was to give the 'Téméraire' a phantom look, as if already more a vision of the past than a present reality.

'THE SHIPWRECK' PLATE VI

'THE Shipwreck: Fishing-boats endeavoring to rescue the Crew,' as its full title is, was painted in 1805. It is now in the London National Gallery.

One of the best examples of this class of Turner's subjects, this early work is reminiscent of Vandevelde and other Dutch sea-painters; but the rendering of the heave and surge of the sea and the toss and writhe of the waves is a

wonderful advance upon anything of the sort that had previously been accomplished. Mr. Ruskin, however, points to several faults in the picture,—the lack of spray, the fact that "all the figures in that boat are as dry as if they were traveling by wagon through the inland countries," and the deficiency in luster and liquidity of the waves—a deficiency the more remarkable because "in merely calm or rippled water no one rendered luster or clearness so carefully as Turner." There is little strong color in the picture, which is painted almost throughout in a leaden gray.

'THE BAY OF BAIÆ' PLATE VII

THE full title of this picture, now in the National Gallery, London, is 'The Bay of Baiæ with Apollo and the Sibyl.' The legend referred to is that of the Cumæan Sibyl, beloved by Apollo, to whom he granted life for as many years as she could hold grains of dust in her hands; but not being endowed also with perpetual youth, she wasted away, to become finally nothing more than a disembodied voice. The mythology of the picture is, however, but incidental to Turner's painting of the bay, "with the gracious splendor of the blue sea which made Roman nobles build palaces around it," and which was praised by Horace as unrivaled in the world. On the left is the Castle of Baiæ, and on the opposite shore distant Pozzuoli; but beyond these landmarks the scene is almost entirely of Turner's own contriving. Indeed, so far from a portrayal of the real Bay of Baiæ is it, that his painter friend, George Jones, wrote on its frame, on the Academy varnishing-day, the words "*splendide mendax*." When Turner saw the inscription he laughed and remarked, "All poets are liars"; but he never erased the words.

Painted lightly and with a refinement of execution which far surpassed his early work, Mr. Redgrave describes the picture when first exhibited in 1822 as "a vision of glowing beauty." Unfortunately, much of the beauty of its color has vanished, but we can still recognize that luminous quality which provoked one observer to exclaim when he saw it hanging among the other pictures at the exhibition, "It looks like a window cut in the wall!"

'VENICE FROM THE CANALE GIUDECCA' PLATE VIII

"MOST of Turner's Venice pictures," writes Mr. Hamerton, "are attempts to convey not exactly the sensation of color given by Venice itself, but an equivalent sensation. All of them belong to his late manner, and some of them to his latest. The characteristics which these works have in common are splendor of color and carelessness of form, the color being in most instances really founded upon the true Venetian color, worked up to the utmost brilliance which the palette would allow, the forms simply sketched, exactly on the principles of the artist's own free sketches in water-colors."

The 'Venice' here reproduced was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840, and is now in the South Kensington Museum. Fortunately it has been well cared for and is in a much better state of preservation than many of Turner's other Venetian pictures.

'PEACE: BURIAL AT SEA' PLATE IX

TURNER painted this picture, now in the London National Gallery, to commemorate the death of his friend and fellow artist, Sir David Wilkie, who died June 1, 1841, on board the steamer 'Oriental' off Gibraltar on his return from a visit to the East, and was buried that night at sea. In describing the painting Dafforne says: "Little is observable of the sad ceremony; in substance the picture is only a steamboat temporarily at rest on the silent waters. Even the glare of the torches which light the sailors to perform their melancholy task fails to render visible the work they have in hand. Yet, nevertheless, the picture is a grand poetic conception, a work that arrests the sympathies of all who look at it. The canvas shows little color; it is covered only with mere modifications of black. The steamship is suggestive of nothing but a huge hearse, surmounted by black banners; the smoke from the funnel may be compared to a gigantic plume, tossed and driven by the night wind, while ship, and sails, and smoke cast their dark shadows over the surface of the sea."

Mr. Ruskin finds fault with Turner's endeavor "to give funereal and unnatural blackness to the sails." Clarkson Stanfield objected to this at the time, and Turner with characteristic obstinacy replied, "I only wish I had any color to make them blacker."

"Not even the 'Téméraire' itself, to our mind," writes Cosmo Monkhouse, "exceeds this picture in genuine pathos. If Turner could not express his sorrow in words, he could do so as no other man ever could with brush and colors. It is a picture to stand before with uncovered head, so deep and reverent is the grief in every touch."

'RAIN, STEAM, AND SPEED' PLATE X

MR. MONKHOUSE describes this picture as "the boldest attempt to represent abstract ideas in landscape that was ever made." The scene represents a train running at full speed across the viaduct of the Great Western Railway over the Thames at Abingdon. With the exception of the rushing engine, the near part of the viaduct and the bridge, the details of the landscape are left to the imagination, the whole being enveloped in a gray mist, illumined here and there with blue and yellowish tints.

Dafforne writes: "Along the viaduct, which seems to stretch miles away into the distance, comes the screeching engine, whose white, fleecy steam-puffs slowly dissolve on its track into the rain-mist. This is the great point of the picture, both of light and darkness, for with a daring license that none but Turner would have ventured to exhibit, the fire underneath the boiler is shown burning as brightly as if it were night, instead of day—a glaring red spot, with scarcely any radiation, surmounted by the black body and funnel of the engine."

The picture was painted when Turner was in his seventieth year, and was bequeathed by him to the National Gallery, London, where it now hangs.

A LIST OF THE MORE NOTABLE OIL-PAINTINGS BY TURNER IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

ENGLAND. LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: Peace: Burial at Sea (Plate IX); Snow-storm; Approach to Venice; Chichester Canal; The Field of Waterloo; Calais Pier; The Tenth Plague of Egypt; The Shipwreck (Plate VI); Morning on the Coniston Fells; London from Greenwich; Fishing-boats in a Stiff Breeze; Snow-storm, Hannibal crossing the Alps; Death of Nelson; The Deluge; Spithead, Boat's Crew recovering an Anchor; Apollo and the Python; Vision of Medea; Garden of the Hesperides; Childe Harold's Pilgrimage; The Holy Family; Crossing the Brook (Plate II); Fire at Sea; Caligula's Palace and Bridge; Dido and Æneas leaving Carthage; Blacksmith's Shop; Venice, Morning, Returning from the Ball; Orvieto; Rain, Steam, and Speed (Plate X); The Meuse; Apollo and Daphne; Æneas with the Sibyl; Harvest Dinner; Carthage, Dido directing the Equipment of the Fleet; Richmond Hill on the Prince Regent's Birthday; Battle of Trafalgar; The Angel standing in the Sun; The Hero of a Hundred Fights; Mercury and Æneas; Mountain Glen; Harvest Home; Ulysses deriding Polyphemus (Plate I); Sun rising in a Mist; Dido building Carthage (Plate III); St. Mawes, Falmouth Harbor; The Bay of Baiæ (Plate VII); Destruction of Sodom; A Frosty Morning; Apuleia in Search of Apuleius; Cliveden on the Thames; Mountain Scene; A Mountain Stream; Petworth Park; The 'Sun of Venice' going to Sea; Jason in Search of the Golden Fleece; Fishing-boats bringing a disabled Ship into Port Ruysdael; The 'Fighting Téméraire' (Plate V); Windsor; Abingdon; Bligh Sands; Cottage destroyed by an Avalanche; Queen Mab's Grotto; Agrippina landing with the Ashes of Germanicus; Venice; The Prince of Orange landing at Torbay; Portrait of Turner (Page 20); Moonlight, a Study at Millbank; View on Clapham Common; Sea Piece; View of a Town; The Garreteer's Petition; The Birdcage; Pilate washing his Hands; Watteau Painting; Lord Percy under Attainder; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; The New Moon; War; Shade and Darkness, Evening of the Deluge; Light and Color, Morning after the Deluge; Whalers; Undine giving the Ring to Masaniello — LONDON, ROYAL ACADEMY: Dolbadern Castle — LONDON, SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM: Venice from the Canale Giudecca (Plate VIII); Vessel in Distress off Yarmouth; East Cowes Castle with the Regatta; Line Fishing off Hastings; St. Michael's Mount; Landscape with ruined Tower — LONDON, SOANE MUSEUM: Van Tromp's Barge entering the Texel — SHEFFIELD, MAPPIN ART GALLERY: Van Tromp going about to please his Masters — IRELAND. DUBLIN, NATIONAL GALLERY: Lake Avernus: The Fates and the Golden Bough — SCOTLAND. GLASGOW, CORPORATION GALLERY: Modern Italy; Hero and Leander; Whalers entangled in Ice — UNITED STATES. BOSTON, ART MUSEUM: The Slave Ship (Plate IV); Mouth of the Seine; Quillebœuf; Dido building Carthage; Rouen — NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM: Grand Canal, Venice; Saltash; The Whale Ship.

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